

Serial No. 09/877,410

REMARKS

The Applicants and the undersigned thank Examiner Marcelo for his careful review of this application. The Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 10-14, and dependent Claims 18 and 19. The Applicants have amended independent Claim 15 to incorporate the subject matter of dependant Claims 17 and 18, as will be discussed below.

Claims 1-3, 5, 8, and 10-14 have been allowed. Claims 6, 15-17, 20-29, 31, and 34 have been rejected and Claims 18 and 19 have been objected to. Claims 4, 6, 7, 9, 17, 18, and 20-34 have been canceled. Applicants have amended Claims 15, 16, and 19 and have added Claims 35 and 36. Upon entry of this amendment, Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 10-16, 19, 35, and 36 are pending in the subject application with Claims 1-3, 5, 8, and 10-14 having been allowed. The independent claims for this application are Claims 1, 8, 15, and 35.

I. Objection to the Claims

The Examiner objected to dependent Claims 18 and 19 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Examiner indicated, however, that Claims 18 and 19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicants have canceled Claim 18 and its intervening Claim 17 and incorporated the allowable subject matter into independent Claim 15. Therefore, the Examiner's objection to Claims 18 and 19 has been rendered moot. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)

The Examiner rejected Claims 6, 22, 23, 27, 31 and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,680,904 to Kaplan, et al ("Kaplan"). Applicants have canceled the above-noted claims without prejudice in order to expedite prosecution of this Application. Applicants reserve the right to submit claims defining the subject matter of the original and canceled claims in a continuation patent application.

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III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

The Examiner rejected Claims 15-17, 20, 21, 24-26, 28 and 29 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kaplan* in view of prior art admitted in the specification of the application. Applicants have canceled Claims 20, 21, 24-26, 28, and 29 without prejudice in order to expedite prosecution of this Application. Applicants reserve the right to submit claims defining the subject matter of the original and canceled claims in a continuation patent application. The Applicants offer the following remarks to traverse the remaining pending rejections.

A. Independent Claim 15

The rejection of independent Claim 15 is respectfully traversed. Applicants have amended independent Claim 15 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of dependent Claim 18 and its intervening Claim 17. The Examiner's rejection of Claim 15 has been rendered moot by this claim amendment. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of independent Claim 15 is respectfully requested.

B. Dependent Claims 16 and 19

Dependent Claim 16 was amended to make it consistent with the amended preamble of amended Claim 15. Dependent Claim 19 was amended to depend from Claim 15 instead of Claim 17, which was canceled. The Applicants respectfully submit that the above-identified dependent claims are allowable because the independent claim from which they depend, Claim 15, is patentable over the cited reference. The Applicants also respectfully submit that the recitations of these dependent claims are of patentable significance. The Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the pending rejection of Claims 16 and 19.

IV. Addition of New Claims 35-36

The Applicants have added new independent Claim 35 and dependent Claim 36. Independent Claim 35 is equivalent to original independent Claim 15, rewritten to include the allowable subject matter noted by the Examiner in original dependent Claim 19 and its intervening Claim 17. Applicants respectfully request that Claims 35 and 36 be passed to allowance. The new claims find clear support in the specification and do not contain new matter.

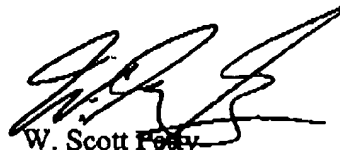
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CONCLUSION

The foregoing is submitted as a full and complete response to the Official Action mailed on August 25, 2005. The Applicants and the undersigned thank Examiner Marcelo for his consideration of these amendments and remarks. The Applicants have amended the claims and submitted remarks to traverse the rejection of Claims 15, 16 and 19. The Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Such action is hereby courteously solicited.

If the Examiner believes that there are any issues that can be resolved by a telephone conference, or that there are any informalities that can be corrected by an Examiner's amendment, a telephone call to the undersigned at (404) 572-2888 to discuss same is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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